1: Pelzer
166, 727

ALl Southeast Asia ALl

/For author's recommendations regarding post-World War II rehabilitation and reconstruction in Southeast Asia and particularly regarding future agricultural colonization schemes, see category 116, pp. 232-242./

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Although most sedentary cultivators in Southeastern Asia make use of the animal-drawn plow, in the densely populated regions the parcelling of land has proceeded so far that many peasants, whose fathers, or ancestors, owned draft animals (carabaos or oxen) and used plows, have farms so diminished in size that they cannot afford to keep draft animals and therefore must till their fields entirely with hand tools. In spite of the fact that they often make very intensive use of their fields, still they are not able to produce enough to meet the modest needs of their families.

In nearly all instances, however, where the governments concerned have attempted to solve this problem by opening up land suitable for sedentary cultivation to settlers coming from problem areas, the governments have been confronted by the fact that these districts, which might offer outlets for the congested areas, are inhabited by shifting cultivators or in some cases by food gatherers. The danger is then that the proposed migration may infringe upon the rights of the indigenous peoples, whose economy and mode of life, as we have noticed, require considerably more land than those of the incoming settlers, who are accustomed to permanent-field cultivation. It is, therefore, necessary for us to understand the various forms of land use in Southeastern Asia and their peculiar exigencies in order rationally to approach the problems of pioneering in the countries around the South China Sea.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA NUTRITION DENSITIES
(Average number of persons per rice-acre per annum)

Quinquennium	*Burma*	*Indo-china*	*Siam*	*Java and Madoera*	*Philip-pines*	*Malaya*
1916–20	1.23	1.75	1.66	4.12	3.13	—
1921–25	1.19	1.67	1.57	4.27	2.67	5.61
1926–30	1.14	1.61	1.57	4.50	2.69	6.13
1931–35	1.19	1.64	1.63	4.60	2.76	6.42
1936–40	1.25	1.63	1.74	4.96	2.79	7.02
1946–50	2.0	2.1	1.6	5.9	3.9	7.2

Because population and the net production of food have increased *pari passu*, it is important to examine the "nutrition density" (persons per acre under rice) since the surplus for export depends on low internal consumption of the Southeast Asia staple and high internal production. The countries of Southeast Asia pre-war showed considerable differences in nutrition density, from Malaya (the plantation-mining specialist) with 7.2 persons per rice-acre, to Siam (the rice-surplus specialist) with 1.6. Malaya, Java and the Philippines had nutrition densities much higher than the rest of neighbouring countries and in the case of Malaya and Java the nutrition density had been steadily rising, whereas in Burma, Indochina and Siam it was fairly static. Over the same period, the domestic consumption of rice per person sharply dropped (by 20-25 per cent) in Burma, Siam and Java and rose about 10 per cent in Indochina, Philippines and Malaya. The postwar figures available show considerable increases of nutrition density everywhere except in Siam, yet these were changes of degree, not of pattern.

Changing Internal Emphasis

Today the very crowded places are firstly, Middle and North Java, Lower Siam and the Red River Delta, where densities of over 1,500 people per square mile occur, with secondary crowdings in Lower Burma, the Lower Mekong, Central Luzon and the Visayas. These concentrations of people are pre-eminently in agricultural areas (Fig. 116), and they are in fact largely made possible by exceptional soil qualities within an area whose general soil fertility is low. These crowded areas have taken part in a commercialisation of local agriculture and their subsequent history has been firstly a

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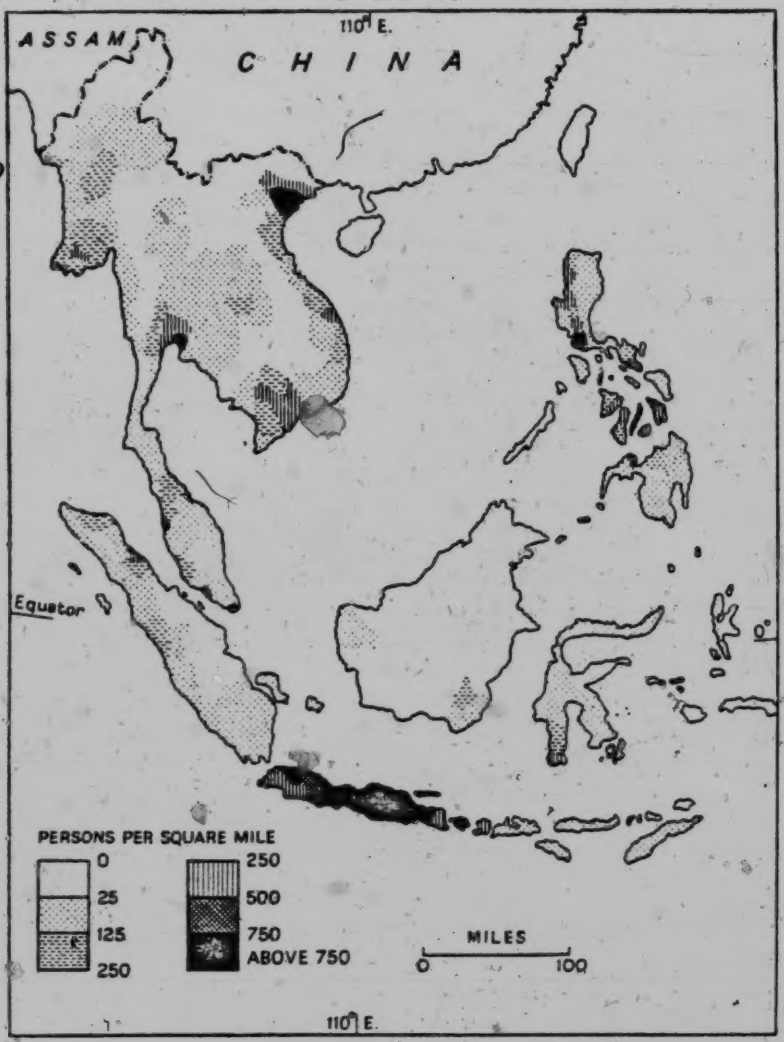

FIG. 116.—Distribution of People in Southeast Asia

rapid increase in people to a point where the new agricultural development ceased to be enough for the large population, leading to the second stage of slow migration and emphasis on commercial agriculture upon newer zones of similar type. Hence the change of emphasis from Tonkin to the Annam coastal plains and then to the Lower Mekong; from the Central Luzon area to Visayan Islands;

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from the plains of Java to the dangerous upper limits of the volcanic country; and from Dry Burma to the Irrawaddy Delta. Sometimes there has been a little agricultural migration—very largely this change has been brought about by different rates of growth rather than movement of people to new places. Everywhere commercialisation of agriculture has led to population increase, because the agricultural technique has not changed from the Southeast Asia tradition of manual work at every stage. The bringing of new areas into cultivation has been followed by an increase in the number of hands to do the cultivating, partly a response to the need and partly made possible by additional nourishment and an added vitality arising from lower disease rates natural to the less populated area, because human diseases are diffused more slowly where people are isolated from one another, as in new areas. Thus Southeast Asia has been the scene of intense pioneering by people seeking, developing and filling new agricultural areas, to create for a time the eldorado of rice-eating peoples and the one safeguard of Indians and Chinese against the vagaries of their own harvests and against the congestions of their home districts.

Minerals in turn have attracted external interest. There has been the pull of gold in the Philippines, of tin in Malaya and nearby islands, of petroleum in Sumatra and Borneo. These great gambles drew capital and pulled in crowds of labourers, wage-earners who were unavailable from local people so tightly held in their manual agricultural systems. Minerals drew millions of Chinese through the South China Sea in the tin rushes and oil rushes of the last hundred years.

Yet another form of commercialised agriculture developed, to provide the industrial raw materials of distant factories in Europe and America and based on crops entirely foreign to Southeast Asia. Sugar, coffee, hemp, rubber, oil palm proved highly successful in this terrain where they had never existed before. Large plantations of them were laid out, still more wage-earning labour was absorbed, a still greater production was obtained, drawing more and more people into virgin areas. Migrations from India and China were further stimulated to work upon the plantations whose uneven development, in successions of booms and depressions, alternately attracted migrants in the boom years and sent them home again in the depressions.

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Political Convergence

These local products for commerce not only stimulated export trade; they stimulated import trades to feed the migrant peoples, to dress them, and to dress the agriculturists so preoccupied that they could no longer spare time to weave for themselves. And trade itself drew external interests; Chinese and Indian traders came in to monopolise middleman functions and Europeans came in and worked out here the complex balancing of their own industrial systems far away. Britain stimulated the commercialisation of Burmese rice production as an assurance of cheap food for an industrialising, overpopulated India. The Dutch fanned out from Java into the adjoining islands. Not to be outdone, the French moved into Indochina as a base for their China trade. Germans for a time controlled the copra trade of the farther eastern islands. Thus all the major Western European powers had colonial interests in the expanding peoples, the expanding production and the expanding needs of Southeast Asia. And the major oriental powers, India, China and Japan, had equally direct interest in Southeast Asia (Fig. 117) as an outlet for their people, a source of rice, a source of raw materials for their industries, and finally as outlet for their own industrial products, India and Japan being mostly involved in this, the latest phase.

Internal Divergences

The resulting pattern of people is one of unparalleled diversity in stages of evolution from subsistence to commerce, in densities of people, in ethnic types, in languages (Fig. 118). The similarity of setting, circumstance and products have disrupted Southeast Asia within itself by economic rivalry in producing similar commodities, and the divergencies of overseas connections with different colonial powers established divergent trade streams, currency differences, educational differences and political differences. Political and economic forces released in Europe and America had their repercussion within Southeast Asia, by means of which French protectionist policies virtually isolated Indochina from its neighbours and Filipinos turned their backs upon Asia. Siam has been wooed, ignored or bullied, depending on the fluctuation of Anglo-French relations in Europe and the opportunism of the U.S. in building up its bloc in East Asia. All sorts of colonial systems have been

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FIG. 117.—Pattern of Modern Migrations

experimented with, so that Southeast Asia has a great range of constitutional forms, from fossilised oriental aristocracies to democracies of a few intelligentsia and to would-be republics trying to combine the gestures of democracies with the powers of autocracies, the whole being permeated by complex trading systems of both Western and Oriental types. All this may be summed up by saying that the cross-currents and backlashes of the world's political and economic systems of the present and past still move

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 Chinese Indians

464 167 years of the present century, the flow of immigration has been large and comparatively steady except during the depression and the two world wars. Chinese and Indian immigrants usually could better their position soon after arrival because their industry and organization were superior to those of the indigenous peoples. Partly because of this, there were constantly new arrivals willing to do coolie work until they too could [178] rise economically. Except for the large-scale repatriations to China and India caused by the depression, the flow of labor thus set into motion was adequate for the economy prevailing in the underpopulated areas until changing conditions created a growing class of landless proletariat and [668] dissatisfaction among both the indigenous and immigrant peoples. This dissatisfaction often became associated with other motivations in nationalist movements.

Controlled migrations occurred only between regions under the same government or those held by governments of the same nationality, except for a limited migration of Javanese labor to Malaya (and to New Caledonia). [166] In the Netherlands Indies and in Indochina the governments endeavored to transplant groups of laborers from overpopulated to underpopulated areas, but in so doing they learned that the process required careful organization, was expensive, and raised serious economic, social, and psychological problems. Such movements could be effected successfully on a limited scale only. This fact obviated the possibility of their contributing substantially to solution of the problem of overpopulation. As labor supply, such migrations were only temporarily satisfactory, because social and religious ties inclined the workers to return to their home villages immediately upon the expiration of their contracts or even to desert. To stabilize this labor force some of the governments tried after the depression to obtain a better adjusted sex ratio in the migrant population by encouraging the immigration of workers' families and the establishment of agricultural villages—a program too recently initiated to make possible a definite appraisal of its comparative success or failure. In Malaya, with the exception of a few Javanese, planned immigration was confined to Indian laborers. It was arranged and operated jointly by the two British governments concerned. There, however, the depression, the growth in voluntary Indian immigration, and India's ban in 1938 on assisted emigration to Malaya tended to render many of the official controls unnecessary. The unplanned and uncontrolled movement of labor across the Burma-India frontier was the sole migration of its type in Southeast Asia.

563 609 The indigenous populations in general hold themselves socially aloof from the alien Asiatics. To the Muslim Malays the Chinese were materialistic, pork-eating idolators; and the Indians, with the exception of the small Islamic minority, were similarly disdained, though regarded as less aggressive. To the sinicized Annamites, the Burmese, and the Siamese,

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LABOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

JAPAN'S TREATMENT of labor throughout Southeast Asia varied according to the military situation, the political relations of Japan with the individual country, and the availability of manpower. Everywhere, however, labor suffered from dislocations, regimentation, and general deterioration in working conditions except for the limited amount of technical training dispensed by the Japanese to create a needed nucleus of skilled workers. The information required to draw a complete picture of the labor situation during the war in each of the countries of this region is not yet available, but from such data as exist—drawn chiefly from former enemy sources—the outlines are reasonably clear.

By mid-1943 their military position in the Pacific War led the Japanese to alter their policy in Southeast Asia. Labor in the area had not previously been regimented on a nation-wide basis, although attempts to register the available manpower and use it for individual projects had been made as the need arose. But the critical shipping situation, which prevented both exports from Southeast Asia to Japan and imports needed in those countries, of necessity changed the objective of Japanese policy from one of economic exploitation for the benefit of the homeland to maintaining Japanese troops in the area and achieving local self-sufficiency and defense.

In June 1943 new labor measures were widely introduced; these foreshadowed large-scale forced labor and indicated that the Japanese realized that patriotic as well as economic and prestige incentives had to be offered to secure native cooperation. Soon after, the transplanting of laborers from the most populous areas to those requiring workers for defense projects and economic development was systematically undertaken. This policy prevailed until V-J Day at a tempo which kept pace with the worsening military situation of Japan.

Japan's political aims were reflected in marked differences in policy in each of the countries of eastern Asia, and also toward separate groups within each state. The comparatively good treatment meted out to the Siamese derived from Japan's need, for propaganda purposes, to maintain the fiction of Siam's voluntary alliance in the Greater East Asia war. Being unwilling, for political reasons, to coerce masses of Siamese workers, and for economic reasons to rely on their small, unskilled and re-

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727 luctant services, the Japanese imported prisoners of war and Javanese
167 laborers for the construction of the Burma and Kra Isthmus railroads.
Even after the pro-Japanese dictator, Pibul Songgram, had been ousted
464 by a resistance government, the Japanese tolerated the change so long as
they retained military and economic control over the country.

727 Malaya, on the other hand, received the least favored treatment. The
[464] only country in the area to which the Japanese did not promise "inde-
pendence," it was earmarked as a Japanese colony. The Japanese were
faced with a small, foreign labor supply whose special skills were adapted
466 almost exclusively to the tin and rubber industries. Since they could
utilize only a small proportion of the country's major produce, there
occurred tremendous dislocation and unemployment of labor. The
Chinese, as the largest, most skilled, and most hostile group, were sub-
jected successively to brutal treatment, registration and regimentation,
and transportation to farming colonies on the peninsula. The Indians
were similarly organized along racial lines through the Japanese-spon-
sored Indian Independence Leagues and the Indian National Army.
The Malays escaped the more rigorous forms of coercion because of
their negligible importance as a source of labor.

[167] Despite the tight network of organization developed by the Japanese,
Malaya's labor problem was never satisfactorily solved; guerilla ranks
were strengthened by recalcitrants of all races and eventually the occupy-
ing forces had to import Japanese and Javanese workers in order to
strengthen the defenses of that vitally strategic area.

727 Indochina, thanks to the survival of the French administration until
the Japanese coup of March 1945, was treated only slightly less favorably
466 than Siam. The Japanese found there a more abundant labor supply
than in immediately neighboring countries but were hampered by the
necessity of working indirectly through French officials, by the concentra-
tion of labor in the north, and its antipathy to furthering Japan's war
[167] aims. As in Malaya, the inadequacy and indifference of the local labor
supply compelled the Japanese to import a few thousand Chinese and
Malay coolies as well as some Japanese technicians and supervisors. A
certain number of local laborers were conscripted to work on defense
• [166] and industrial projects and an undetermined number of Tonkinese were
transported to work on plantations in the south. Unemployment seems
[464] not to have become a major factor, although as the war progressed there
was a marked shift of agricultural workers to the cities, only partially
offset by the evacuation of some laborers from heavily bombed urban
areas. In common with the other laborers of Southeast Asia, Indo-
chinese workers suffered from coercion and inflation but apparently not
from nation-wide regimentation or transportation to work outside their
own country.

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Indians

Next to the Javanese, the Burmese endured the greatest hardships during the Japanese occupation. Burma was more completely devastated by military campaigns than any other country in the area, and its proximity to India made it Japan's frontier zone. The need to win Burmese cooperation led Japan to grant Burma "independence" on August 1, 1943, and thereafter the local intelligentsia were placated by a Burmanization of the administrative services. But the country's laborers were in a far worse plight than they had been under the British administration. The Indians, whose number in Burma had been halved during the 1942 campaign, were immediately thereafter exposed to persecution by the Burmese. Virtual pogrom conditions in the delta compelled them to flee to Rangoon for Japanese protection and employment. Indian coolies supplied the casual labor needed in the nation's capital, and most of the white-collar class was absorbed into the Indian Independence Leagues and Indian National Army. Burmese laborers, who had long agitated for a restriction of Indian immigration, now found themselves bearing the brunt of Japanese requisitioning, which was represented by the puppet native government as a patriotic service. They had to perform heavy manual labor far from home, for low wages, and under alien and often harsh supervision. They suffered, in addition, from the knowledge that their own fields were neglected and their homes unprotected. Burma was frequently praised by the Japanese for having supplied more cooperative labor service than any other area in the southern regions, but nevertheless Javanese workers had to be brought in.

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Java, with the greatest labor reservoir of the area, was inevitably the country whose manpower was most intensively exploited by the Japanese. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the Javanese served as coolie labor for the construction of defense works and means of communication and also were trained by the Japanese for more technical work in shipyards and in factories. They were shipped by the thousands to areas outside their island as local needs and the exigencies of the military situation dictated.

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Originally the Japanese planned to perpetuate, on a far vaster scale, Dutch colonization schemes in Sumatra; in this they not only encountered the same obstacles as had their predecessors, but they found they could exploit all of the island's resources they could use with the manpower and machinery locally available. In mid-1943 they seem to have transferred the plan to Borneo, where additional labor was required to develop such local industries as timber. Many hundreds of male Javanese workers were shipped to Borneo, while smaller groups were sent to other areas.

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Unemployment during the Japanese occupation was serious only in Malaya. Elsewhere the defense and economic programs of the Japanese,

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Malaya

real stake in the countries of the Nan Yang, as settled members of the local society, and not as aliens. The third point is that the Chinese community has never been one of middlemen only; there has always been a fair proportion of cultivators within it. The poor peasantry of South East Asia now includes a Chinese as well as an indigenous element. The 1947 census of Malaya shows 45,000 Chinese engaged in rice growing, and another 100,000 in market gardening and fishing, essentially peasant pursuits.

The pressure to which the South East Asian peasant has been subjected by the combination of Western and other alien influences has been severe. But we must beware lest we misinterpret it. In a recent book which gives a comparative analysis of the agrarian situation in the countries of South East Asia, appears a striking statement about Malaya—that development of mining and rubber industries has pushed the native Malay population more and more towards the east, into the areas of the former Unfederated Malay States: 'The Malays', it is said, 'considered the east as safe from Western penetration, and therefore preferred this undeveloped area to the irrigated lands on the western coast, mainly because there they could get only temporary land licences, since a complete survey of all potential tin-bearing regions had not yet been made'.[1]

It is true that the eastern States are predominantly Malay in population, and that the greater part of the vast immigrant population of Malaya is densely settled on the western side of the peninsula, where the resources are richer and access easier than on the eastern side. It is also true that there has been some lack of enthusiasm among Malay peasants to colonize the new Government-developed irrigation areas, for complex reasons, including lack of capital in the past, and disinclination to move from their ancestral homes. But it is quite incorrect to put these facts together and to argue that the Malay has been pushed by alien pressure over from the west to the east of the peninsula. Apart from some seasonal movement for rice harvesting or fishing, the internal migration of Malays is inconsiderable, despite the rapid development of communications in recent years. Both the 1931 and the 1947 census show that whatever movement takes place—well under 10 per cent—is almost wholly from one State to another, either on the west coast or on the east coast, or to Singapore. Hardly any movement at all occurs from the west to the east. Moreover, the 1947 census shows that between 1931 and 1947 the Malay population of the western States increased by about one-third, at a rate slightly higher than that of the eastern States. The proportion of Malays in these western States, in terms of the total population of all ethnic groups, also increased slightly during this period, due primarily to the decline of Indians and Indonesians. In other words, though foreign economic penetration has immersed the western Malay in a flood of alien elements, it has not driven him away. On the contrary, he has preferred to stay and await events.

[1] Erich H. Jacoby, *Agrarian Unrest in Southeast Asia* (New York, Colombia University Press, 1949) p. 113.

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[438] One reason for this is economic advantage. The coming of rubber, in particular, has given to the Malay peasant of the west coast an income considerably higher, on the whole, than that of the east coast peasant.

[166] The effects of Westernization are profound. But they do not lie in crude physical displacement of the peasant or degradation of his living conditions. They lie in the widening of the gap between his expanding range of wants and his level of productivity, and in his inability to measure and in any way control the economic forces operating in his field. Westernization has meant for the peasant an enlargement of the social horizon—more knowledge, through better communications and education, of other places, of other peoples of kindred and dissimilar interests. It has created new ambitions: for different clothing, for new uses of leisure, for a better status for his children, for a position of power in the political scene. All this has disturbed the traditional patterns of peasant society. These patterns, and the class structure of South East Asian society of which they were a part, were probably never too satisfactory to the peasant. Anxiety and evasion must have often been the response to either too rigid or too elastic a rule—and the peasant seems often to have suffered from the exactions of his superior in the social scale. But the scope of the system was known, if not its precise implications. Nowadays the scope of the system has for the most part passed beyond the peasant's grasp, and much of it has become de-personalized.

To illustrate this by giving a more concrete analysis of some of the values in the peasant's life, let me take the area of Malaya and Indonesia where Islam is the major religion of the people.

In his daily life the Indonesian or Malay peasant is governed largely by the canons of behaviour, the ties of friendship and neighbourliness, the relations of work and social intercourse of his village community. So much is this so that in Java the *desa*, the village, was crystallized by the Dutch into an administrative and developmental unit, and its communal structure strengthened for welfare purposes. But as important as the village, and indeed often basic to its structure, are the family and larger kin organizations. From these a person gets his social status and much of his land and other property, and they have the primary role in his marriage and other crucial events in his progress through life.

Such domestic and local relationships also provide a framework for the peasant in his attempts to come to terms with the forces of nature and human destiny. His world of spirits is a local world. In Indonesia the ancestors do not play the predominant role which they do, for instance, in Annam. But the village, the seashore, the surrounding jungle, wells, trees, and stones are the home of many kinds of spirits, which afflict man with sickness or misfortune, or stand by him as his familiars to guard him. Basic in the religion of the Indonesian peasant is this local, essentially parochial, spirit element. All these values guide his economic and social conduct, and mean a great deal to him.